

What is CONOPS?

(An overview)

CONOPS is “coordination of effort.” It is a blue print, which outlines how we are to utilize the frequencies available to us today, in a given situation of a predefined magnitude. It also tells non-traditional agencies how they can communicate when coordinating with all first responders in our State.

It does not take away anything from what you utilize for communications in the performance of your daily responsibilities. As a first responder community, we are agreeing to utilize current frequencies and protocols in a predefined manner, should an event occur which is far beyond our normal operating parameters.

How would CONOPS Work?

Currently, there are 6 frequencies, which have been identified to support “on-site” communications during a CONOPS situation. These frequencies are as follows;

1. STATE WIDE STATE POLICE (SWSP)
2. NATIONWIDE CAR TO CAR (NWCC)
3. (EMRGY MEDICAL SERVICES/LAND/AIR SEARCH & RESCUE (LASER)
4. STATE POLICE CAR TO CAR (SPCC)
5. STATE WIDE FIRE (SWF)
6. STATE WIDE CAR TO CAR (SWCC)

Agencies, which do not currently have these frequencies programmed into their mobile and portable radios, will now be allowed to do so. Should an event occur that meets or exceeds the following criteria;

- An event/incident involving response from four (4) or more agencies
- An event/incident involving a duration of at least six (6) or more hours
- An event/incident involving response from at least three (3) levels of gov't.
- An event/incident where normal use of common simplex (local talk-a-round) channels will not support the incident commanders needs

If any three (3) of the previous criteria are met, the incident commander may request a “CONOPS” level one (1) through six (6) be activated to support their operations. (e.g. a level three request would result in SWSP, NWCC, and EMS/Laser being dedicated to that particular event for it's duration)

Request Protocols / Procedures

“When an Incident Commander recognizes they may be in a “CONOPS” situation”

Step 1: The incident commander calls MEMA at 1-800-452-8735 to make the request to the MEMA Director, or their designee (the 1-800 line is available 24/7/365). Be prepared to identify yourself, your situation, your specific request, and contact information. The MEMA contact will immediately engage the MEMA Director for decision-making.

Step 2: The MEMA Director will consider the request and approve or disapprove in accordance with the criteria listed in this CONOPS document. (The decision criteria are guidelines and therefore flexible. In the After-Action review, the guidelines may be modified by the signatories to this agreement. The purpose is to remain open, assimilate lessons learned, and to be better prepared for future events.)

Step 3: When the MEMA Director authorizes a CONOPS level, MEMA will request that State of Maine Public Safety Dispatch immediately issue a teletype requesting a general broadcast alert for the region where the incident is occurring. Additionally, it shall be included in the information to be broadcast, which channel has been designated as the in-bound frequency for all units responding to the incident. Once on scene, in-bound units will be redirected to the appropriate frequency by the incident commander, or their designee. MEMA will also notify the incident commander when this has occurred. The teletype will indicate: which CONOPS level is to be in effect - one of CONOPS1 through 6; when the CONOPS ends (duration of authority) if possible; the name, position title, organization, and contact information for the incident commander to whom the authority has been granted; the purpose of the CONOPS authorization; and the location of the incident.

Step 4: All communications centers within the incident region shall immediately broadcast that a CONOPS incident is in effect, and shall indicate at what level (1-6) so that responders know what channels are now dedicated to the incident commander in charge of that incident.

Step 5: As the incident escalates, or deescalates the incident commander may again call MEMA to adjust the request. If the CONOPS authorization is no longer required, the incident commander will contact MEMA to request a stand-down of the CONOPS, which in turn will prompt a teletype from the Department of Public Safety to all pertinent stations.